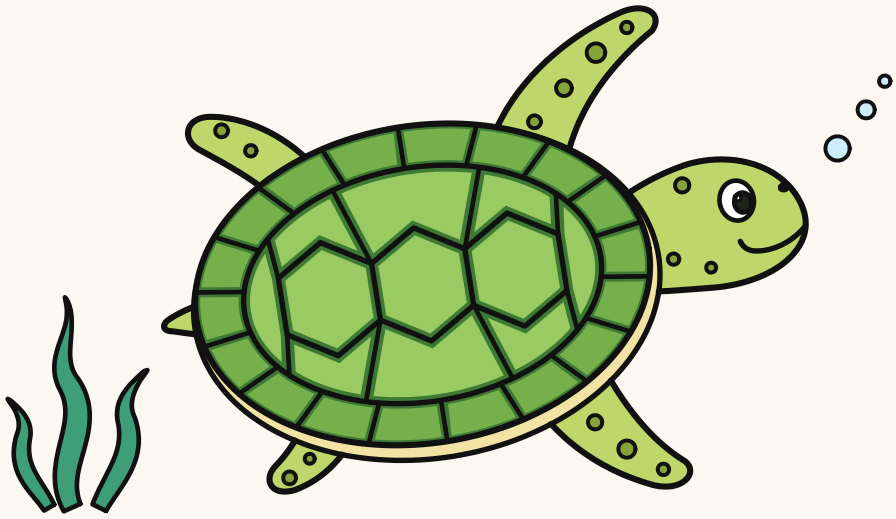
How to Draw a Turtle

12 easy steps for beginners



What you'll need

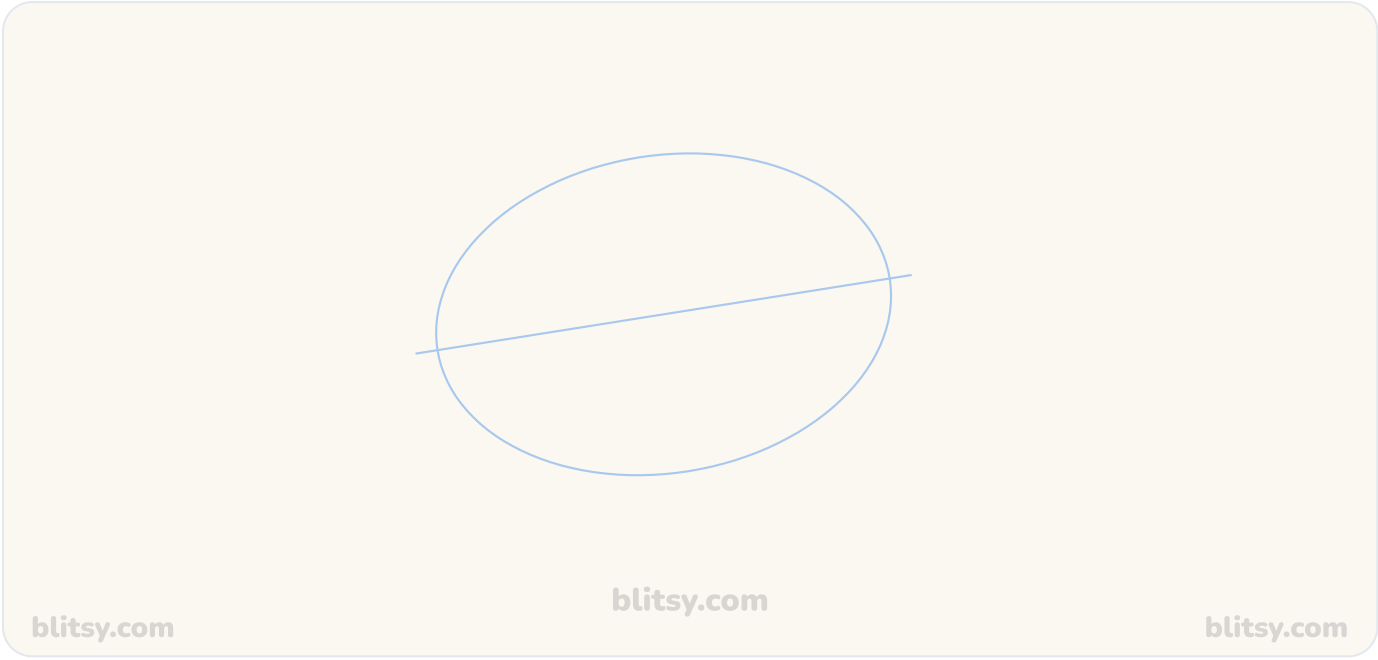
- A pencil
- An eraser
- A black fineliner
- Colored pencils or markers
- Paper laid sideways

How to use this guide

New lines for each step are shown in **blue**; lines you already drew are gray. Draw lightly first, then ink and erase near the end.

Read the full tutorial online →

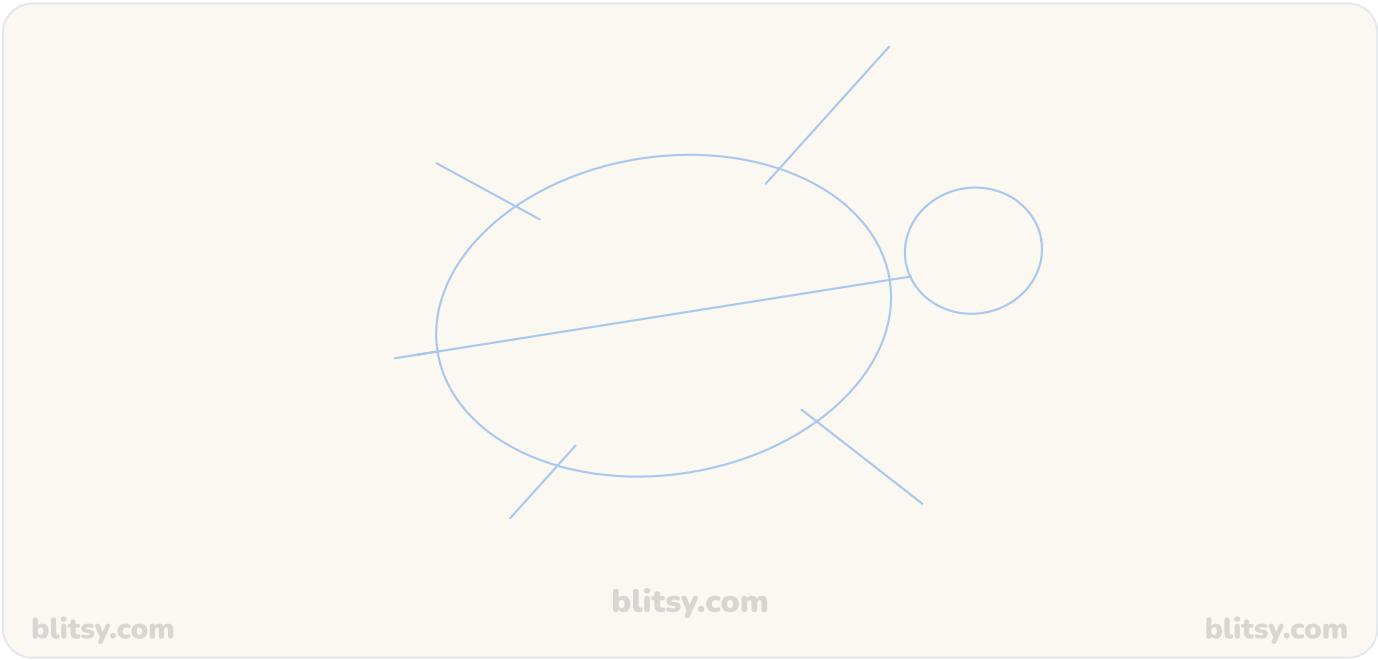
STEP 1 Sketch the shell oval and a center line



Draw a wide oval a little left of the middle of your page, about one and a half times as wide as it is tall. Tilt it slightly upward on the right, so the turtle swims uphill. Then draw a straight line through the oval from end to end. That center line is the spine of the whole shell pattern.

💡 **Tip:** Keep this oval faint. You will trace over most of it later.

STEP 2 Add a head circle and flipper lines



Place a small circle just past the right end of the oval, touching it, for the head. Now draw four straight lines coming out from under the shell: a long one up and forward, a long one down and forward, and two shorter ones at the back. A tiny dash at the far left end marks the tail.

💡 **Tip:** Make the two front lines about twice as long as the back ones.

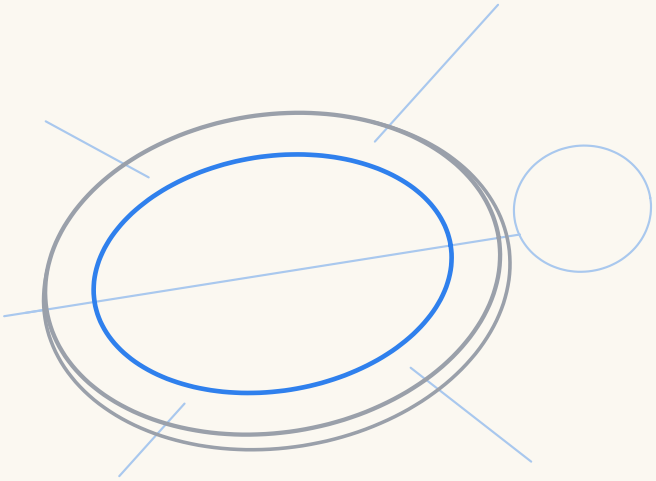
STEP 3 Trace the shell edge and the belly rim



Go over the oval with a firm, smooth line. Then draw a second curve just under its lower edge, hugging the shell and fading out toward the top. This thin band is the edge of the belly shell peeking out underneath, and it gives the turtle a little thickness.

💡 **Tip:** Turn your paper as you go around the oval so your hand always pulls the line.

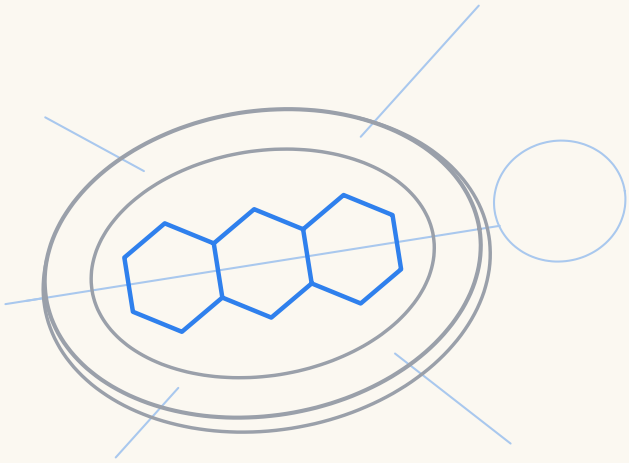
STEP 4 Draw an inner ring for the edge plates



Inside the shell, draw a smaller oval with the same tilt, leaving an even gap all the way around. I make that gap about as wide as my thumbnail. The band between the two ovals will hold the small edge plates, and the space inside becomes the big middle plates.

💡 **Tip:** Look at both ends of the oval: the gap there likes to shrink.

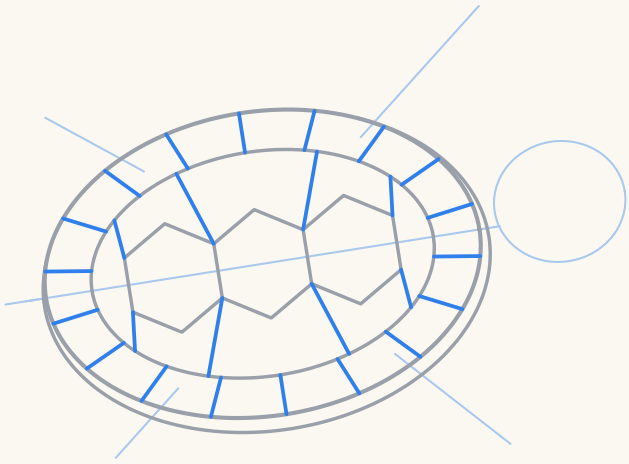
STEP 5 Line up three hexagons on the center line



This is the part that makes a shell look like a turtle. Draw three hexagons in a row along the center line, each one sharing its side edge with the next. The line should cut every hexagon through its middle. I draw the center hexagon first, then add one on each side, so the row stays centered in the shell.

💡 **Tip:** A hexagon is six sides: a pointed roof, two straight walls and a pointed floor.

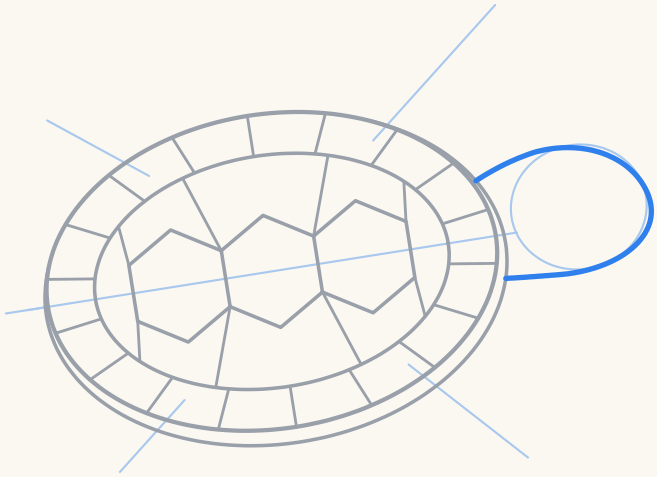
STEP 6 Fan out the side plates and edge plates



From each corner where two hexagons meet, draw a line outward to the inner ring, both above and below the row. Do the same from the outer corners of the end hexagons. These lines split the middle of the shell into wide side plates. Next, chop the outer band into small plates with short lines that point toward the center, spaced evenly around the ring.

💡 **Tip:** Space the edge plate lines first at the four ends of the oval, then fill in between.

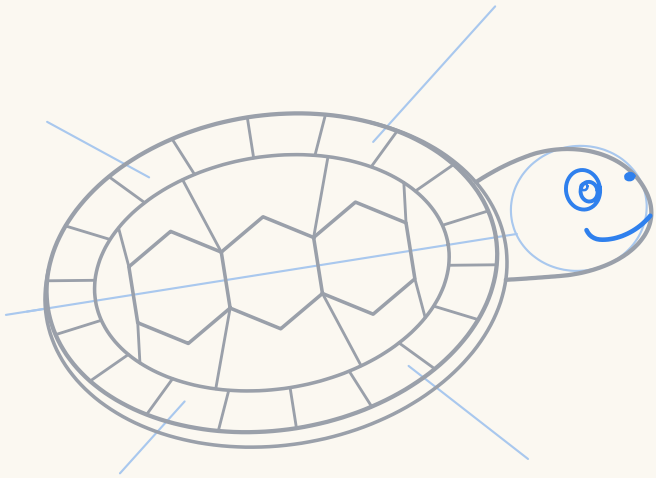
STEP 7 Draw a round head and neck



Start on the shell edge above the center line and draw the top of the neck rising into a rounded head. Curve around the front, where the face makes a blunt little beak, then come back under the chin to the shell. My head is a bit bigger than a real turtle's would be, because a larger head looks friendlier in a cartoon.

💡 **Tip:** Stop the neck lines at the shell edge. They disappear underneath it.

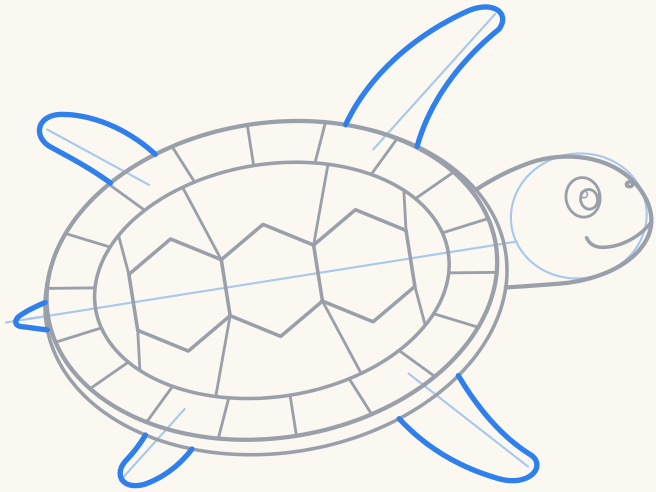
STEP 8 Give it a kind eye and a smiling beak



Put one oval eye high on the head, closer to the front than to the neck. Add a dark pupil looking forward and a small shine dot. For the mouth, draw a curved line from the tip of the beak back under the eye, ending with a tiny upward hook. A dot near the front is the nostril.

💡 **Tip:** Keep the smile short. If it runs past the eye, the face starts to look goofy.

STEP 9 Shape four flippers and a short tail

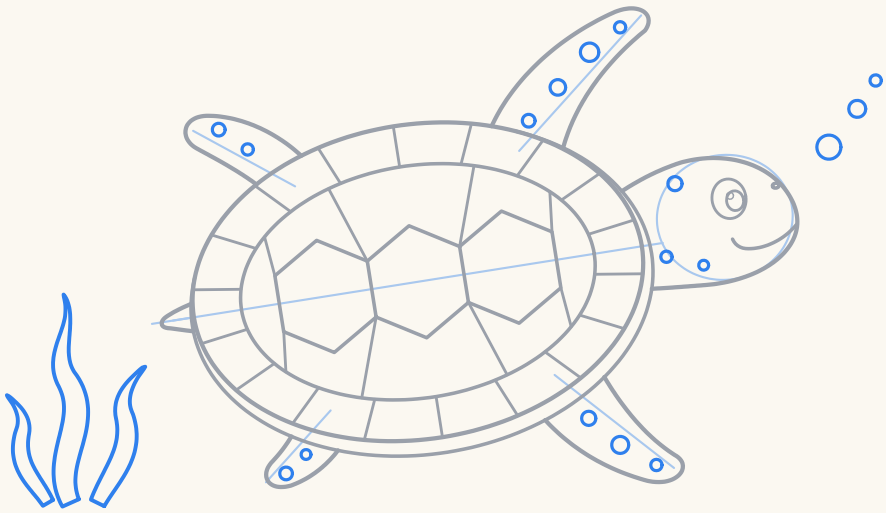


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Around the long front guide lines, draw two flippers that look like curved paddles: wide where they leave the shell and narrow at the rounded tip. The back flippers are short, rounded ovals. Add a small pointed tail at the left end. Sea turtles push through water with their big front flippers and steer with the back ones, so that size difference matters.

💡 **Tip:** Curve the front flippers backward a little, like wings in the middle of a flap.

STEP 10 Add spots, bubbles and seaweed

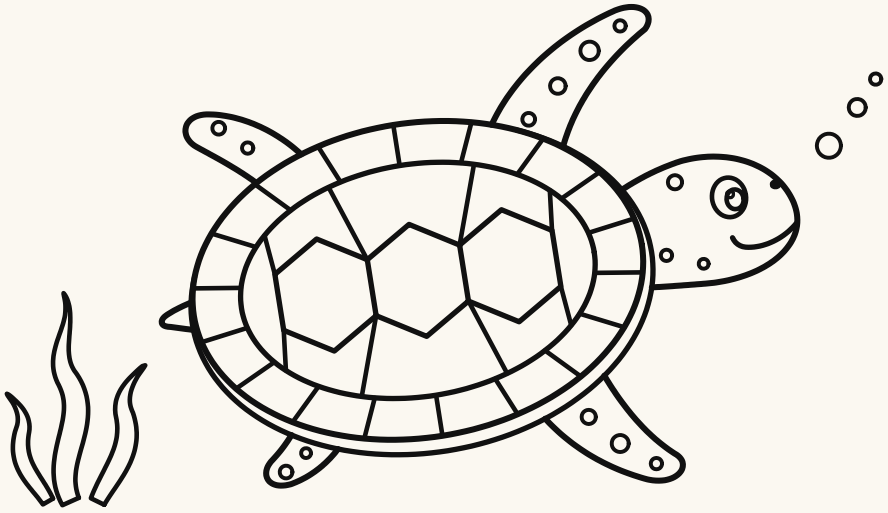


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Sprinkle small circles of different sizes over the flippers and the head. Keep them clear of the outlines and the face. Then add three bubbles rising in front of the face, smallest at the top. A few wavy seaweed blades in the lower left corner tell everyone this turtle is underwater.

💡 **Tip:** Odd numbers of spots on each flipper look more natural than even ones.

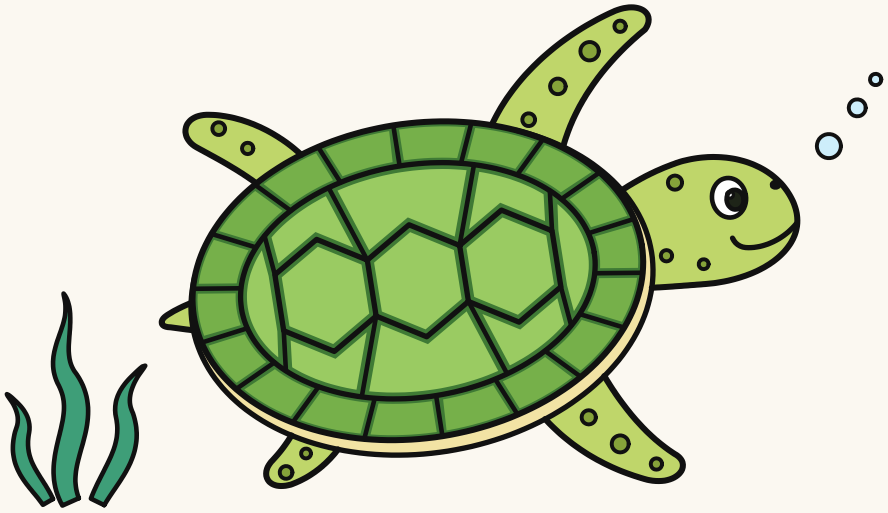
STEP 11 Ink the keeper lines and erase the guides



Trace every line you want to keep with the black pen: the shell, every plate line, the head, the flippers and all the little extras. Skip the guide oval, the center line, the head circle and the flipper sticks. Once the ink is fully dry, erase everything that's still pencil.

💡 **Tip:** Ink the long shell curves slowly; the short plate lines can go faster.

STEP 12 Color your turtle



Color the head, flippers and tail yellow-green, then dot the spots with olive green. For the shell, color each plate light green in the middle and press harder with dark green near its edges. That darker frame around every plate makes the hexagon pattern pop. Finish the belly rim in cream, the bubbles in light blue and the seaweed in sea green.

💡 **Tip:** Leave a tiny white spot in the eye unshaded so the turtle looks bright.